

Classroom Activity: Physical Activity Show-and-Tell

Young children just love to show off new skills that they've learned or are in the process of learning. It seems like nearly every young child wants you to watch as he or she throws or catches a ball, spins around, or shows off a new dance. Children are proud of how fast they can run, how high they can jump, and how far they can stretch. This pride is hard-earned. Remember that young children are still working on mastering those motor skills, so it often takes many tries before they finally "get" something.

Encourage children to share their achievements with their class by holding an organized, weekly physical activity show-and-tell. Be sure that the environment is one that is supportive, cheerful and nonjudgmental so all participants feel comfortable. Remember that the goal is to encourage children to be active, so cheering for their achievements is just as important as giving them a chance to show it off.

Invite children to stand up one at a time, come to the front of the class, and share a new dance, a new skill, or a new activity that they have mastered. Provide some guidance and direction to children who are "stuck" or whose activities are a bit "wild" but encourage some of the out-of-the-box thinking that preschoolers seem to have plenty of. If a child recently learned to swim, let him or her demonstrate on "dry land"; if a child just figured out how to make his or her superhero cape fly behind them in the perfect way, let them show it off; if a child can jump high, let them display this new skill to the others.



Parent Education

Discuss physical activity with parents. Share with them the efforts that your child care site is making to ensure that their children are participating in regular, safe physical activity. Encourage them to visit the USDA's MyPyramid for Preschoolers website (<http://www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers/index.html>) for more tips and information about physical activity and their youngster. Consider including a physical activity section in any take-home newsletters or parent updates that get sent home. Describe some of the activities, and encourage parents to continue those activities at home too. You may even want to include photos of children with captions like "Michael can jump so high!" or "Maria taught us all a new dance."

Staff Activity

As a staff, participate in a community event that includes physical activity. It may be the Walk Kansas initiative, the Relay for Life, a Bowl-a-thon, or any one of numerous activities in your community. Share this activity with parents and children and encourage them to participate with you. This is not only an excellent opportunity to get some extra physical activity, but it is also a great demonstration to parents and your community that your staff is committed to being healthy role models for young children. Here are some links to a few of the more common types of events, but watch your community calendars for activities that offer both physical activity and community involvement.

Walk Kansas – A statewide health initiative. <http://www.walkkansas.org/>

Relay for Life – These events are generally used as fundraisers for the American Cancer Society, but they also often involve community partners and always include physical activity. <http://www.relayforlife.org/relay/newtorelay>

Polar Plunge and Strut – Designed as a fundraiser for the Special Olympics, there are multiple events throughout the state each winter. Many plunge events also include a 5k "strut." <http://www.kssso.org/plunge.html>



Physical Activity Resources for Preschoolers

Kids Health in the Classroom website has curriculum materials for preschool through 12th grade, covering many areas of health. <http://classroom.kidshealth.org/>

Health E Tips- Just-A-Minute (JAM) School Program brings health education & daily physical activity into the classroom. JAM is designed to teach healthier lifestyle habits to children & adults. This program delivers a weekly 1-minute exercise routine and a monthly health newsletter.

Growing Up Fit Preschool Fitness Activities is a resource from Iowa State University Extension. It provides good, basic information about teaching movement and balance to preschoolers. <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1359B.pdf>

5-A-Day the Preschool Way is a collection of activity ideas that include healthy nutrition messages. These activities can be accessed at: http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/hsmrs/5_a_Day_Preschool/CD%20-%205%20A%20Day%20and%20Physical%20Activity%20Chapter.pdf

Physical Activity promotional brochures for parents, teachers, and principles. Also available in Spanish & Chinese. From the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/physicalactivity/brochures/index.htm>

Fun Fitness Activities website contains physical activity ideas for early childhood and preschool children. <http://www.dhss.mo.gov/PhysicalActivity/Activities.htm>

MyPyramid for Preschoolers, part of the larger USDA MyPyramid website, includes nutrition and physical activity tips for young children ages 2-5. The preschool-level materials can be accessed at: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers/index.html>.



Kansas Team Nutrition resources:

Power Panther Preschool is a nutrition education & physical activity program for preschoolers. Materials, grants funds, and technical assistance provided. Look for applications in Spring 2011 on www.kansasteamnutrition.org.

Family Fun, Food & Fitness is an initiative to assist schools in planning & hosting a wellness-centered event to engage parents and community members. Although the printed materials and mini-grant funds are only available to schools, the planning guide can be accessed online at: www.kansasteamnutrition.org.